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INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9131  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0866  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 6963  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 6034  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 1027  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 3760  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 1711  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY PRIORITY 9556  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 9903  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 2493  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 7898

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 016800

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2016

TAGS: PK PREL PGOV

SUBJECT: NO CONFIDENCE VOTE ON THE PM: SOUND, FURY, SLIGHT SIGNIFICANCE

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs Peter W.Bodde,  
Reason: 1.4 (B and,D)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Opposition parties joined forces on August 23, tabling a long-anticipated, no confidence vote on Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. The opposition knows that it does not have the votes needed to succeed, but seems determined to relish this opportunity to ramp up its criticism of the Musharraf government in the run up to the 2007 general elections. Given the ephemeral nature of this "coalition," cooperation on subsequent issues remains highly unlikely.  
END SUMMARY.

¶12. (U) After a summer of press play, five parliamentary components signed on to an attempt to bring a vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz: the Islamist Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), the populist Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the conservative Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and a collection of Balouch and Pashtoon nationalists and members of the Assembly from the Frontier and Tribal Areas (FATA) affiliated with or sympathetic to the MMA. Between them, they control perhaps 141 votes. In contrast, PM Aziz's coalition numbers 201 votes.

¶13. (C) The no confidence motion is a 17-page petition, backed up by a 500-page "charge sheet" of press clippings and commentaries involving 30 alleged major financial irregularities and scandals during the Aziz administration. Article 95 of the constitution requires the Assembly vote on the motion within seven days, by August 29. High theater and histrionics are predicted for the interim.

¶14. (C) COMMENT: Hoping to benefit from divisions within the ruling coalition, the opposition argued for a secret vote on the no confidence measure, but the government opted for a more disciplined public balloting, despite opposition warnings of a protest if a secret ballot is not used. The GOP decision to not allow a secret ballot is the conservative route, given the virtual certainty that the no confidence motion will fail. Foreshadowing the transitory nature of the opposition's cooperation, the MMA is already complaining that the government introduced its amendments to the Hudood Ordinance on August 21 in a deliberate effort to divide the opposition before the no confidence vote could be tabled. The opposition was never united -- except around the issue of the no confidence vote. In fact, the PPP, the driving force behind the no confidence motion, worked with the government

in order to introduce the Hudood Ordinance amendments in the first place.

BODDE